

How to Bring Forth Much Fruit

by Michael Ngubane

The sermon emphasizes the necessity of abiding in Christ to bear fruit and the importance of God's pruning in our spiritual lives.

Duration: 1:08:38

Scripture: John 15:1-2, John 15:6, John 15:13-15

Topics: "Fruitful Living", "Christian Obedience"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the importance of love and obedience in the life of a believer. He emphasizes that Jesus considers his followers not just as servants, but as intimate friends. Jesus demonstrated the greatest love by laying down his life for his friends, and he commands his disciples to love one another in the same way. The preacher also highlights the analogy of Jesus as the true vine and his followers as branches, emphasizing the need for fruitful lives and the pruning process that leads to greater fruitfulness.

Transcript

Once again, Lord Jesus, we come to your feet. Lord, it is so true that we are incapable of doing anything without you. We need you, Lord Jesus.

Lord, if you are in us and with us, we have everything. And Lord, if you are in us, we do not appear to be like those who are poverty stricken, but we are made wealthy. Lord, draw nigh unto us as you know our needs.

Here is, Lord, your holy word. Speak to us through it, Lord. And I bring myself to you.

Lord, of myself I cannot say anything, but I trust in your strength. So be with us, Lord, in this service. Amen.

I'm going to read a well-known text from John 15. The 15th chapter of John from verse 1. I am the true vine and my father is the vine dresser. Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away and every branch that bears fruit he prunes that it may bear more fruit.

You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. Abide in me and I in you as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches.

He who abides in me and I in him bears much fruit, for without me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in me he is cast out as a branch and is withered and they gather them and throw them into the fire and they are burned. If you abide in me and my words abide in you, you will ask what you desire and it shall be done for you.

Verse 9. As the father loved me, I also have loved you. Abide in my love. Verse 12.

This is my commandment that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than to lay down one's life for his friends. Verse 13.

You are my friends if you do whatever I command you. Verse 14. No longer do I call you servants for a servant does not know what his master is doing, but I have called you friends for all things that I have heard from my father I have made known to you.

We will read thus far. May the Lord bless the reading of his holy word. As I've said, this is a well-known portion of scripture.

Nevertheless, one cannot but be blessed again and refreshed and revived as the Holy Spirit applies the scripture to our hearts. Jesus was speaking to his disciples and he introduces himself as the true vine. Now, we know that when Jesus illustrated in this fashion, his disciples knew exactly what he was getting at for vineyards were very common.

There were many types of vineyards and all sorts of varieties. They weren't all the same. And also if you go to the market to buy grapes, there are different varieties on sale and you will choose the type that appeals to you.

We find also as this illustration is that God made his people Israel to be his vine. As a chosen nation, as a people with special love that chose them, God introduced himself to them and revealed who he was. We also find that in the gospel according to John, that he takes special care to reveal the nature of Jesus, what Christ is like to his people.

However, the Jewish leaders were not very impressed when Jesus called attention to himself and who he was, that he would say, I am the bread of life. I am the truth. I am the one.

And they would ask questions like, who is he to say I am? We only know one who says I am, and that is God himself. It angered the Jewish leaders very much that he had the audacity to say I am. They said only God himself, the almighty.

So who is this chap to call himself I am? But really, one asks, is there any other way for him to reveal himself than what he really is? But if your eyes are dimmed and crusted over, veiled, even if he speaks of himself and reveals himself, you will just become harder and antagonistic to the one who reveals himself. Now Jesus says, I am the true vine and the father is the vine dresser. And then he drives the point home by saying, and you are the branches.

Every branch in me that does not abide in me, the father removes. So here is a question to be examined. If a person is in Christ, can it be that he is fruitless? It is obvious that that is the case.

It is possible. Then we have to also ask the question, what brings this condition about? How is it that a person can be in the vine and yet be fruitless? It was before Jesus ascended to heaven. It had to be that

Jesus had to go back to heaven.

So that upon ascension, he could send the Holy Spirit to speak to our hearts and to directly reveal himself to our hearts. So it is of crucial importance that God, the Holy Spirit can live inside you and reveal himself to you, in you. For by his Holy Spirit inside us, we being united to him, he reveals himself and we are able to comprehend and understand who he is.

But let us get back to this point of fruit. Every branch in me that does not bear fruit is taken away and thrown outside. Remember once Jesus was walking with his disciples and he came upon a fig tree hoping to get figs.

But he found that it was figless. Jesus cursed that fig tree because it did not bring forth what was expected of it. And that is why Jesus expects the fruit that is available to him.

It is appropriate for a child of God. We can ask ourselves the question, is the fruit of God evident in my life? Should it not be the case then and there is no fruit, where does the problem lie? What causes me to be fruitless as a child of God? Well the first obvious question must be, am I even united to the Lord, to Jesus? Am I in connection with him, the one who says, I am the true vine? Because Jesus said, each branch that is in me must bear fruit. Every branch that is connected to him as the real vine must bear fruit.

It is the spontaneous consequence of him being the one who produces that life. But then Jesus does still say, any branch in me that does not bear fruit is removed, for it is fruitless. So what causes that fruitlessness in the life of a Christian? There is no other reason.

Sin. Wickedness. Whatever manner of iniquity it might be.

Even if that branch has had connection to him, any sin that is condoned in that person's life, whatever manner or type it might be, causes fruitlessness in the life of that person. Causes fruitlessness for it to wither. And then it becomes useless.

And all that branch is good for is to be removed and thrown away. And then Jesus says, but every branch in me that does bear fruit, something happens to him. That person, that branch gets pruned.

It gets pruned so that it might bear even more fruit. Now this is where we often go astray or we get mixed up as Christians. When God comes to us and prunes us, he comes in his love.

He comes intending good. He comes denying his life for us. He comes to his child, the one whom he loves.

And if he notices that there is some fruit, but there is work to be done on it, then he applies his pruning shears. Now we must discern here, brethren. Yes, some fruit may be evident.

But that fruit is not yet that quality. It's not yet marketable. It's not yet profitable to be sold at the market.

Maybe there is lots and lots of fruit on this one tree, on this branch, but each one, each grape is so small that it is not satisfactory to the owner of the vine. That vine owner cannot be proud of the quality of his fruit. He cannot get a high market value for it because they are so small and he cannot get what he expects.

Now, as a Christian, you might say, well, I do show fruit and plenty of it as well. The question would be, is it really the quality? Are these desired? Are they attractive? Or is it the type of fruit that people give one

glance at and move on? You see now, people will move around a market place and they will try this bit of fruit and that bit and they don't find what satisfies them. them, and so they just move on to the next to try it out.

So, if it is not fruit that satisfies Jesus, then it is applicable here where Jesus says that I come, even though there is some fruit, but I prune it. It must be pruned and cut so that it would bring forth much fruit and of marketable value, good fruit. And so, when the vine dresser comes or the farmer comes to work in his field, he does not come wearing gloves.

When the vine dresser gets involved with his vine, he does not come in a very nice and nicely dressed way, but he comes and can be crude, so to say, and uses the knife and can cut and cause pain. It may cause bleeding to that vine. It might mean that there are tears that are shed and there is sorrow, but you need to say, Lord Jesus, because it is you and you are the one who has given me life.

If you are applying your pruning shears, then I want it. I want to bear good fruit for tomorrow. Have that goal that you want to bear good fruit.

You want to be a blessing to other people. Maybe you are very conscious of the fact that you haven't yet fulfilled what God expects of you. Maybe you know that you are a Christian, but with your Christianity, you find that you still get upset easily.

You still get irritated. You get angry. You hold bitterness and grudges and you don't know what to do about it.

Maybe also you find yourself at times being like these very Jewish leaders who opposed Jesus and said, Who are you to speak in such a crude manner to us? They were more conscious of who they were as being a Pharisee, as being a scribe or a Sadducee, as being of religious importance, that they no longer saw themselves before God. Now, every branch in me that does bear fruit, the Lord will prune so that it will bring forth abundant fruit. It will be lush with abundance and quality.

You could ask yourself as well, well, what type of fruit do I bring forth to the people all around me? Is it the fruit of bitterness and sourness to them? What is it that they experience by being with me? There are such types of fruit. We just think of a lemon. A lemon looks attractive, it looks colorful and looks appealing, but once you bite into it, it is awfully bitter.

And whoever bites into that lemon shows by the expression on their face that this is sour, it is not appealing to them. Well, what do people get when they bite into you? God can use any instrument He wants to come and prune you. It might be in the form of a child and you become upset and you say, what are you telling me to do? How dare you tell me how I should live my life and you don't realize that this is God's pruning shear.

God has sent this child to point out something in you. Maybe as a husband, your wife comes to you and says to you as a husband, you know, that which you said was really inappropriate. You shouldn't have said it like that.

Or the way, the manner in which you spoke was not fitting. How do you react? Are you angry? You're upset? You don't accept what she says? How do you respond? Is there that spontaneous rebellion that rises up within you that you resist and reject these pruning shears in the form of whoever that comes to you? You need to let that cut you. You need to be pruned so that you can bring forth good fruit.

Maybe your child, it's your parent or your grandmother that comes to you and you need to hear from them. And they are the pruning shears that God is using. Maybe you get upset and there's a rebellious attitude and you sour up when you hear those things and it's evident that you are rejecting what you have been instructed to do.

You need to accept that cutting, that pruning, so that you can bring forth good fruit for the morrow. Maybe at work. Maybe you're the one who's in charge.

Perhaps you know how things should run. It could be that a lesser employee comes to you and says, but shouldn't it rather go like this? How do you react? Do you accept it? Some just cannot handle it. Who are you to tell me what to do? And where are you from? What do you know? I am the one who knows.

And I'm boss here. I know everything about this work. And where are you from? Now, some don't respond like that verbally.

They keep silent. But their face tells the story. You can just see it written all over them that they reject completely what they told.

Are you abiding in Jesus? If you are connected to Him, He doesn't expect this type of fruit if you are connected to Him. What proof is there that you are connected to Jesus if the person who comes to you and tries to help you or to instruct you in some way feels rejected and that you totally ignore what they have to say? Well, they don't see any connection in your life. If the Lord comes with that pruning knife, with the pruning scissors, in whatever shape or form, whoever He uses to do it, let him do it.

He does it because He wants to produce good fruit in you. We asked earlier on, how can a person be connected and yet remain fruitless? Maybe you try in vain to pray and pray more, but it's like you're just beating the air. Even when you read the Bible, it's as if though it's just empty, meaningless.

There is some place where you have gone astray between you and God. There is some argument between you and God. There is some loss of unity and harmony between you and God where you have got into a conflict with God.

Otherwise, it shouldn't be like this. You experienced a time when you knew peace with the Lord and a close intimacy with God. And in your experience of closeness with the Lord, you knew what it was like to have Him talk to you, to speak to you, to send you to go and speak to other people, and it was a wonderful experience.

But maybe today you find it is silent. There is just silence. Even when you read the Word of God, it's silent.

There is nothing that blesses you. There is nothing that attracts you to make you want to sit more with the Word of God. If such is the case, if that's your condition, what should you do? Should you just go on with your condition? No, it should not be the case.

You need to inquire of God, asking Him, Lord, where have things gone wrong in my life? Lord, what has gone wrong in my life? Where have I gone astray? I don't feel that peace that I had, Lord. I don't feel that sweetness that I had with you, Lord. And say, tell Him, Lord, if I continue like this, not experiencing the sweetness of that relationship, I will just die.

God who is gracious will show you. It is important that when He does show you, that you listen. So when He speaks, you need to listen and heed.

You need to do what He tells you. Your lack of peace, your joylessness, your lack of sweetness in the Lord is because something has gone wrong. So brethren, in the many things that God has taught us in this revival, one of these things is that we should not stay silent with things in our heart.

If there is something wrong in the heart, go and make it right. And if you do that, oh sorry, if you neglect to do that and you stop confessing sin, then things go wrong because you've neglected to do that. That is exactly what God has shown you.

On the other hand, when you are willing to be honest and upfront with God and confess sin as it really is, you'll find there is immediate connection with the Lord and immediately that joy returns. So brethren, it's not a matter of just coming to church. What does it help if you come to church and you come in and you go out and things aren't changed and your condition remains the same? Maybe you're fully aware of what is eating you up.

And you know exactly what it is that is consuming you and eating at the very heart of life inside you that causes you to lose all of God's presence and His image in your life. Then allow God's pruning shears to cut at you. It will be so beneficial to you, to those around you, to the whole church.

It makes such a difference. Never fall into the awful habit of coming with your sin to the service and you knowingly hang on to it Instead of allowing the Lord to deal with you to such an extent that when you get home it is visible that the Lord has been at work in you. There is joy in your life.

There is real fruit that can be tasted by them. If we just become habitual pew warmers and we just come in and go out in the same condition we will just lose all life and we get a reputation as those who have lost the Lord's presence and you've just dried up and withered away. But Jesus says, abide in me.

He guarantees us that if we abide in Him there will be fruit. If you live in Him, in His presence, you'll find that this fruit that is spoken of will be evident. Otherwise you'll be known as one who's involved in Christianity but you're not in it.

It's not in you. Let me direct this at our children. We are glad children if you come to church and to the house of the Lord.

But if yours is just a coming in and going out and you never get connected to this vine, you're never grafted into this vine himself, then it's utterly in vain that you come to church. What are you getting to the age of 13, 14, 15, 16 already and there's no real evidence of change? You haven't yet made your decision for the Lord and it's evident that you're not yet connected to Him. Well, let it be evident today.

God doesn't exclude his speaking. He doesn't exclude his speaking to any age group. And if he's able to speak even to a little child, how much more so to you who've been listening for 10, 15, 20 years and there's not yet a surrender to the Lord? A change in your life? Some have the excuse, well, I just don't feel it yet.

I don't feel like it yet. I liken that response to one who's involved in the occult. In the occult tradition, a person says, well, I haven't yet felt like I need to be involved yet.

Or I do feel, I feel the urge. That's what people who go into training for witchcraft do. In that traditional way with spiritism, they wait till they have the spiritual burden.

And when they feel it, then they get involved in the occult. Now, you can't do that in being a child of the Lord. You don't wait for it just to happen, for the urge to come.

The word of the Lord is very clear. There's nothing doubtful or that is unsure about it. When it is preached, the word of God is clear for you to understand.

You don't have to wait for an urge to get a grip on you. You don't have to wait for some sudden revelation at night to get a hold of you. You just respond and be obedient to God's word.

In verse 6 it says, If anyone does not abide in me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered. The person does not abide in Jesus, that one becomes useless. They are good for nothing.

And I say to you, if you're not prepared to make that decision for Jesus today, yes, even today, then you are just a useless branch to be cast out, to wither and be discarded. And to be burnt in the fire. But Jesus says, however, if you abide in me and my words abide in you, you can ask whatever you want and it will be done for you.

he will answer, it shall be done for us if we abide in Him. What is He expecting of you? He puts it very simply. He says He wants connection with you.

He wants you to stay in Him, to abide in Him, live inside Him. For how long will you stay outside of Jesus? How long will it go on that Jesus doesn't know you? How long are you going to let this go on, that you don't hear anything from God, you don't hear Him speaking to you, there's no commands, there's nothing that He speaks into you, there's nothing. How long will you just let it go on like that? Jesus wants it to happen, wants it to be evident that you are in Him, and that the fruit is there as the proof.

For He says, the Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and you will prove that you are My true disciples. The name of the Lord is glorified, He is uplifted when the fruit of the Lord is evident among His people. The one who gets close to you will find something from the Lord in you.

He will experience that there is a change in your life. They will witness that God Himself has been at work in your life. In Galatians 5, it speaks there of the evidence of long-suffering and pain and patience and compassion and love, all there because of the working of the Holy Spirit in this person's life.

It moves me deeply when Jesus says, you are My friends. He emphasizes the relationship of love. In verse 12, He says, this is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.

And greater love has no one than this, than to lay down His life for His friends. Jesus gave His life, He laid down His life for His friends, so that He could make us to be much more intimate to Him than just His servants, but His friends. The Lord said, a servant doesn't know what the master is doing.

But I take from My Father and I reveal it to you, showing that you are not just My servants, but you are My intimate friends. What a desire! What a beautiful expression Jesus uses of His people. He says, you are not just My servants, but you are My friends and I reveal everything to you.

I don't hide anything from you. Is there a friend like unto Him, who reveals His heart to you, holds back nothing from you, and He wants you to know what's happening in heaven? He wants to show you the

intimacy that is possible, as He has shown it with the Father. So we waste our time and waste our time, and we lose out on such a wonderful calling that the Lord has for us.

Are we really His friends? Am I His intimate friend? Is there anything that He needs to hide from me? Is there something that I am hiding from Him? That just wastes and messes us up. If I can just reveal my heart to Jesus, He will reveal His heart to you. If you bring yourself to Him as you are, He will reveal Himself and He will show you what is right and what's wrong in your life.

And He will show you what is right and what is wrong in your life. And He will show you how intimate He will make you with Himself, so that He will make you His close friend, and will expect you to show that same love to those around you. Is there somebody who is your enemy? Somebody that you are in conflict with? That you just can't get along with? Maybe that's not a person from the world, an unsaved person.

Maybe he's also a Christian, or she. If you allow that, you are separating yourself from this Jesus who has such love for us. He who doesn't want to hide anything from us.

He who wants us to experience that same intimacy that He has with the Father. So if there is a lack of fellowship between you and somebody else, then you've lost out. There's somebody that you're in disagreement with or in conflict with.

As a child of God, that is not right. What should be done? If you allow that, you are separating yourself from this Jesus who has such love for us. After this service, when we've finished here, go and make right with that person.

Be reconciled, so that we would find in your life exactly what we have read here. For Jesus wants good fruit from us. And the name of the Father will be glorified through it.

And your true discipleship will be evident. Those who are truly His and are children of God will be evident. Those who remain, who abide in His love.

Let nobody be your enemy. Let the love of God be evident in you. For Jesus reveals how much He loves us.

Let's not disappoint Him in being disobedient to what He has told us. Remember when He went up to Golgotha. Remember how they insulted Him, slapped Him, spat upon Him.

He had good reason to hate them. But instead, right to the end, on the cross, He still said, Father, forgive them for they know not what they do. They don't know what they do.

The Lord said, Father, forgive them. The Lord is showing us that we too should forgive. We must forgive others.

If we are to be like Him and to walk in His steps, then we have got to be like this. May God help us that His word would abide in us. Shall we pray? Lord Jesus, we thank You for Your living word.

Lord, we trust that it is going to produce life and has already done so in our midst. As we are obedient and heed what You say. Lord, thank You that Your word is straightforward.

You do not hide it from us. Thank You, Lord, that You have made the way possible. You have laid down Your own body to be the way.

Thank You, Lord, for laying down Your life to make us, we who are Your enemies, to be Your friends. Lord, fill us with that spirit. Lord, help us to confess with absolute honesty everything that is at enmity with that spirit, with Your Holy Spirit.

Lord, help us to confess with absolute honesty everything that is at enmity with that spirit. Lord, help us to do it this very day. We will not let the sun go down on our sin.

Lord, You have called us to such a wonderful relationship with Yourself and with Your children. Lord, produce this wonderful fruit in our midst. Lord, we want to unite in prayer and say, yes, Lord, we want You to do it.

We accept Lord Your pruning shears. We accept Your pruning even if it means that we bleed. We thank You, Lord, for the promise of the fulfillment of Your word.

Amen.

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